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USAID 50 ANNIVERSARY

## SNAPSHOT

# Defending Rights in English

**Legal professionals are ready to access better educational and job opportunities**



Photo: USAID/RLS-Formal

*Students practice English skills during a mock trial session that took place in the USAID-sponsored Academic Legal English program.*

***Fifty students of Law and Shari'a faculties completed coursework in international human rights law, mock trial preparation, criminal and commercial law, and TOEFL preparation in a USAID-funded Academic Legal English program.***

To help broaden horizons for students from all over Afghanistan and enhance their chances of attaining better educational opportunities at universities abroad, USAID sponsored a five-week legal English program. As part of the curriculum, students presented legal research topics on one of sixteen human rights problems facing Afghanistan.

Addressing students and guests honoring a “Human Rights Law Day” in the last week of the program, Dr. Sima Samar, chairperson of the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission, cited human rights violations, still sanctioned by custom, such as forced childhood marriage. Dr. Samar urged the students to support human rights and to protect the equal rights of all members of society. “It is not enough to be ranked first in a human rights class. It is the duty of every one of us to respect and enforce human rights.”

One female graduate remarked, “The program helped me find a new vision and cause in fighting for the rights of every Afghan, so that no other child experiences the persecution I endured in the hands of an oppressive Taliban regime.” She added that she will take the English skills learned from this training to help enhance her chances of obtaining scholarships abroad.

This unique educational program is in its fifth year and is part of USAID’s larger rule of law efforts across Afghanistan. Previous graduates have received Fulbright scholarships and have raised their Test of English as Foreign Language (TOEFL) scores by 70 to 100 points. Several of this year’s instructors were past graduates that obtained Master of Laws degrees from the United States and serve as shining examples of the program’s continued success and sustainability. The goal of the program is to produce a generation of competent legal professionals with advanced legal skills, by helping them access higher educational opportunities, use legal research resources, and find employment with Afghanistan government ministries and educational institutions.

The USAID project is designed to develop the institutional capacity of the justice sector, increase access to justice, particularly for women, and promote a robust rule of law environment.